



2025 Regional Council Election Candidate

Region 4

Name: Buket Ayez

Professional Title: Head of Careers and University Counseling

Institution/Organization: Nord Anglia International School

Country of Residence: United Arab Emirates

Member Group: Secondary (High School)

Applicant Questions

Explain your motivation for pursuing a leadership role with International ACAC, as well as why this position in particular. Highlight how your leadership experience and involvement with the organization make you a strong fit for the role..

For as long as I've been in this profession (time flies almost 15 years now!!!), my work has been rooted in connection, advocacy, and ensuring that every counselor's voice is heard. Over the past three years, I've served on the International ACAC Professional Development Committee, where I've worked to design PD that is efficient, inclusive, and truly relevant to our members. I speak up when needed, I think that is what I bring best to the table; especially to protect PD as a core priority for counselors!

Beyond committee work, I've led multiple active WhatsApp networks for counselors in our region (including creating the first one), organised regional conferences, and trained colleagues through THE CAP program. I'm the only Unifrog Advisory Board Member from the Middle East, the sole Certified Educational Planner (AICEP) in the UAE, and in 2024 was honoured as Best Counselor in the Middle East; these are all recognitions I share with the community I serve.

This position is a natural next step: it formalises what I already do every day! I link people together, amplify our region's voice, and create opportunities for growth so that we are all one heart, one soul working for one purpose: our students' futures! My leadership is collaborative

and inclusive, ensuring no one works in isolation because I have so often seen what happens when we don't unite. To me, this role is about listening to our region, carrying those voices to the Board, and making sure what we talk about together turns into changes that truly make a difference for our community.

Drawing from your previous experience in volunteering and leadership, how have these roles equipped you with the skills and insights necessary for the Founding Regional Representative position? Please highlight your leadership philosophy and strategies for effectively managing and leading a volunteer committee, with a focus on communication, collaboration, and recognition. Additionally, share specific accomplishments that demonstrate your ability to build professional communities, mentor emerging leaders, and promote inclusive and culturally responsive practices—key responsibilities of this role.

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As a Founding Regional Representative for International ACAC, how would you outline your understanding of the role, including the priority areas you would focus on, your overall vision for the region, and the challenges you anticipate addressing? Additionally, what innovative solutions would you propose to strengthen all regional networks, enhance member engagement, and improve communication between members, the Council, and the Board, while acknowledging current practices or programs you find effective?

I see the Founding Regional Representative as both a connector and a problem-solver: someone who represents our region's needs to the Board while fostering a cohesive network locally. My priorities would be as below:

- Building a strong, formal regional association that links counselors, universities, and partners. (we are already working on this with other counselors in the region)
- Delivering region-specific PD that's accessible, culturally relevant, and something people look forward to.
- Advocating globally for student access regardless of passport, curriculum, or finances.

Innovation is key! I would launch a Regional Hub: an online platform where members can access PD recordings, resource libraries, and a calendar of events. Through my work with the Nord Anglia Group on developing a similar platform from the ground up, I've seen first-hand how to create tools that are practical, accessible, and truly useful for our community. I'd also pilot Micro-PD Circles, short virtual meet-ups led by members, to encourage regular exchange without heavy time commitments.

The challenge is that our region is incredibly diverse and transient, both geographically, economically, and culturally. Communication can easily fragment and people can easily move onto the next role. That is where connection is lost! My solution is to create both in-person touchpoints (rotating mini-conferences) and a consistent digital infrastructure so members feel equally connected, wherever they are.

Importantly, our region is already taking steps forward in recognition and professional collaboration. As one of the counselors selected to work directly with KHDA, I see a clear opportunity to align that momentum with International ACAC, creating joint initiatives that raise the profile of school counseling, offer robust PD, and formalise our community's presence on both local and global stages.

As a Founding Regional Representative, advocacy for international students is central to International ACAC's mission. Identify a critical issue in college admissions or international education that you would prioritize addressing in your region. Explain its significance, the potential impact on students and institutions, and how you would collaborate with regional and global stakeholders to drive meaningful change.

A critical issue in our region is ensuring universities fully understand and recognise the diversity of pathways available to our students, not just the traditional IB or A-Level routes, but also mixed curricula and vocational elements. While not many of our students currently follow these paths, we have the opportunity to encourage them if global universities are prepared to accept and value these qualifications.

My priority would be to work with entities such as KHDA, where I am one of the selected counselors, to develop clearer guidance for universities, in collaboration with International ACAC, on how to evaluate these credentials accurately. This could include producing official resources, case studies, and training for admissions officers that highlight the rigour, skills, and employability outcomes of our region's curriculum offerings. Now that equivalency is also an official pathway, I am ready to work with universities and counselors to help them understand how we can create better access for our students.

On the student side, this advocacy would open new possibilities for those who might thrive in a mixed or vocational pathway but currently feel constrained by perceptions of limited

university acceptance. By aligning KHDA, ministries, and IACAC, we can both inform universities and empower students; turning curricular diversity into an advantage and ensuring every student has access to the path that suits them best.

Explain how you would use this position to advance International ACAC's strategic plan by aligning your top three priorities with the organization's three pillars: enhancing member experience globally, clarifying the international brand, and optimizing internal operations.

My goal in this role is simple and human: make our counselors feel seen, resourced, and connected and turn that energy into better outcomes for students. Drawing on my work as a PD Committee member, the founder of our first regional WhatsApp network, a CEP in the UAE, a Unifrog volunteer for the Middle East, and a KHDA-selected counselor, I'll align three clear priorities to International ACAC's pillars.

1) Enhancing member experience globally

Priority: Build a usable, welcoming PD ecosystem.

Regional Hub: Online home for PD recordings, resource library, shared events calendar (already co-building similar platform with Nord Anglia).

Micro-PD Circles: Short, member-led sessions across time zones plus a micro-mentoring ladder for new counselors.

Hybrid touchpoints: Low-cost rotating mini-conferences and virtual office hours.

Measure what matters: Quick pulse checks and annual needs survey.

2) Clarifying the international brand

Priority: Tell our region's story clearly and credibly.

Curriculum Clarity Initiative: With KHDA + International ACAC, create guidance for universities on mixed pathways/vocational elements (BTEC) using case studies.

Counselor Voices: High-impact profiles showcasing rigor, diversity, and outcomes.

Co-branded webinars: KHDA/IACAC sessions for admissions on credentials, English proficiency, and school context.

3) Optimizing internal operations

Priority: Make participation easy and volunteering joyful.

Clear comms spine: Mailing list, monthly digest, quarterly town halls.

Lightweight data loops: Simple forms feeding a dashboard to brief Council/Board with evidence.

Volunteer structure: Defined micro-roles, timelines, recognition cadence.

Foundational governance: Formal regional association aligned with bylaws and succession planning.

I don't see this role as a title; I see it as service, carrying our region's voice into rooms where decisions are made, and bringing back tools and opportunities our counselors can use immediately.

Most importantly, this work is personal. As a Fulbright Scholar, I know what it means to search for an opportunity, fight for it, and step into a new world because of it. International education didn't just shape my career; it shaped my voice, giving me the courage to speak up for access and equity early on. I'm not an "accidental counselor"; this profession is my calling. This role is

the natural continuation of a journey I began years ago-to connect, advocate, and create opportunities for my community and beyond